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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Sovereign God, You are wisdom without end and mercy without limit. We worship You.

Lord, have compassion on our Nation. Heal our physical, mental, and spiritual wounds. We are worn out from this challenging season. Restore us to the vision of a liberating freedom that enables justice to flourish. Hear the prayers of our Senators, and give them Your peace. And, Lord, thank You for the degree of resolution that has occurred in our Nation's election process. Remind us all of the wisdom of Mark 3:25 that says, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PFIZER VACCINE TRIAL

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, this morning, Pfizer announced positive results from its eagerly awaited coronavirus vaccine trial, with early data suggesting the vaccine is 90 percent effective.

This trial is taking place at over 120 sites, including at the University of Iowa's medical school. The University of Iowa's portion is being led by Dr. Patricia Winokur, an infectious disease expert and associate dean. The trial involves about 250 Iowans who have volunteered to participate. The trial is not yet complete, but this is exciting news and an important step to halting the virus.

I am proud of Iowa's role in making sure the vaccine will be safe and effective.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, November is National Adoption Month.

Each November, families across the country finalize adoptions and celebrate the creation of new families and connections. On National Adoption Day, which is celebrated on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, a special effort is made to finalize as many pending adoptions as possible. Last year, over 4,000 adoptions were finalized on that day. While I am sure that this day will look a little different this year due to the coronavirus, I am confident that family courts and child welfare agencies will still make it a special day for many, many families—happy families—because they will be able to bring new ones into their families.

The pandemic has created significant challenges for the children and families in our child welfare system. With travel restrictions and limits on visitors in hospitals, adoptive parents are meeting

their children for the first time ever over video chat instead of in person. Kids in foster care are having to wait longer for placements, and foster parents are facing the added stress of school closures. Court proceedings are taking place over Zoom. Despite the challenges, both new challenges and old challenges that can accompany adoption, parents in Iowa and across the country are still making the choice to open their hearts and homes to children in need.

Congress has worked in the past to reduce barriers that would-be adoptive parents face. I will continue my efforts of making sure adoption remains an option for children in foster care who can't be reunited with their families, women who are facing unexpected pregnancies, and all parents who are willing and able to provide safe and loving homes for kids in need. There were over 100,000 children in the foster care system who were waiting for adoption in 2019. That 100,000 was approximately one-fourth of the number of kids in foster care. Congress must work in a bipartisan way, as it has for many years, to make sure adoption can become a reality, not just a dream, for all of these kids. We must also make sure that child welfare agencies have the tools and flexibilities they need to serve the families in their communities.

For years in the Senate, I have worked to elevate the voices of youth in the foster care system. These young people are their own best advocates, and they can tell you that the thing they want the most is a caring and loving family and a permanent home. What would you expect from any of these young people who are moved from home to home maybe two or three times in a given year?

As I continue to work in Congress toward the goal of helping all children find their forever families, I will always keep the best interests of children at the forefront.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of James Ray Knepp II, of Ohio, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I see the majority leader on the floor, and while I have the floor, of course, as a matter of courtesy, I will yield to him if he has some comments he wants to make and ask that I then be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, before I do yield, I understand Senator SCHUMER is coming. So I will yield the floor to accommodate our two leaders, but then I would ask I be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ELECTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week record numbers of Americans exercised the right which generations risked everything to hand on to us. I want to spend a few minutes this morning talking about what we saw last week, where we are now, and where our great country will go from here.

There is one aspect of last week that has gotten lost that I want to single out right at the start. By every indication, the 2020 election appears to be have been free from meaningful foreign interference. There is no suggestion that our foreign adversaries were allowed to undermine the integrity of our process.

According to the Director of the Cyber Security and Infrastructure Se-

curity Administration, “we have no”—no—“evidence any foreign adversary was capable of preventing Americans from voting or changing vote tallies.”

GEN Paul Nakasone, the head of the NSA and U.S. Cyber Command reported Tuesday night, “The actions we have taken against adversaries . . . have ensured they’re not going to interfere in our elections.”

The Trump administration and the Senate spent 4 years supporting the State and local election authorities on the frontlines: new tools and information-sharing partnerships; unprecedented coordination; hundreds of millions in new funding; new, painful consequences for bad actors, like Russia, if they interfere.

The absence of any reports of foreign interference is a ringing endorsement—a ringing endorsement—of our bipartisan work, and it slams the door on the embarrassing, irresponsible rhetoric that some Washington Democrats spent 4 years broadcasting.

Too many voices tried to talk down our progress, urged Americans actually not to have confidence, and smeared anyone as unpatriotic who opposed far-left proposals to rewrite election laws.

Well, the people who pushed this hysteria could not have more egg on their face than they do right now. None of their demands became law—none of them. The Speaker of the House did not get to personally rewrite election law. And yet, because of the sensible, bipartisan steps that some of us championed, our defenses and counter-measures proved to be in radically better shape than back in 2016.

So let’s talk about where we are now. According to preliminary results, voters across the Nation elected and re-elected Republican Senators to a degree that actually stunned prognosticators. Likewise, the American people seemed to have reacted to House Democrats’ radicalism and obstruction by shrinking the Speaker’s majority and electing more Republicans.

And then there is the Presidential race. Obviously, no States have yet certified their election results. We have at least one or two States that are already on track for a recount, and I believe the President may have legal challenges underway in at least five States.

The core principle here is not complicated. In the United States of America, all legal ballots must be counted, any illegal ballots must not be counted, the process should be transparent or observable by all sides, and the courts are here to work through concerns.

Our institutions are actually built for this. We have the system in place to consider concerns, and President Trump is 100 percent within his rights to look into allegations of irregularities and weigh his legal options.

Let’s go back 20 years ago. Twenty years ago, when Florida came down to a very thin margin, we saw Vice President Gore exhaust the legal system and wait to concede until December.

More recently, weeks after the media had “called” President Bush’s reelection in 2004, Democrats baselessly disputed Ohio’s electors and delayed the process here in Congress.

In 2016 election laws saw recounts or legal challenges in several States.

If any major irregularities occurred this time of a magnitude that would affect the outcome, then every single American should want them to be brought to light. And if the Democrats feel confident they have not occurred, they should have no reason to fear any extra scrutiny.

We have the tools and institutions we need to address any concerns. The President has every right to look into allegations and to request recounts under the law, and, notably, the Constitution gives no role in this process to wealthy media corporations.

The projections and commentary of the press do not get veto power over the legal rights of any citizen, including the President of the United States.

Now, more broadly, let’s not have any lectures—no lectures—about how the President should immediately, cheerfully accept preliminary election results, from the same characters who just spent 4 years refusing to accept the validity of the last election, and who insinuated that this one would be illegitimate too, if they lost again—only if they lost. So let’s have no lectures on this subject from that contingent.

In late August, Secretary Hillary Clinton said: “Joe Biden should not concede under any circumstances . . . I think this is going to drag out, and . . . he will win it if we don’t give an inch.”

That same month, Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic leader both stated: “[President Trump] needs to cheat to win.”

In October, when Speaker PELOSI was shopping some conspiracy theory about the Postal Service, she recklessly said—listen to this: “I have no doubt that the president . . . will lie, cheat, and steal, to win this election.”

Now, does this sound like the chorus that has any credibility whatsoever to say a few legal challenges from President Trump represent some kind of crisis?

At this time last week, small business owners in cities across America were boarding up their windows in case President Trump appeared to win and far-left mobs decided to reprise their summer rioting.

Suffice it to say, a few legal inquiries from the President do not exactly spell the end of the Republic.

Here is how two professors from Fordham Law School and New York Law School put it: “For centuries, we have asked people who are unhappy with their fellow citizens or government agencies and institutions to bring their claims to court.” President Trump’s is “a traditional response that affirms rather than undermines American institutions.”

This process will reach its resolution. Our system will resolve any recounts